

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 13463 041045Z

44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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TRSE-00 PC-04 DRC-01 /182 W
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R 040940Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9534

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 13463

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.OMO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: MARCOS NEGOTIATES WITH TAUSUG REBELS

SUMMARY. PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS MET IN MANILA WITH TAUSUG REBEL REPRESENTATIVES AND REITERATED MAJOR POINTS OF PREVIOUSLY-ANNOUNCED PROGRAMS FOR MUSLIM AREAS OF PHILIPPINES. EARLIER MEETINGS THIS YEAR BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND REBELS HAVE HAD MINIMAL IMPACT ON MUSLIM INSURGENCY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LATEST NEGOTIATIONS IS NOT YET CLEAR. END SUMMARY

1. ACCORDING TO REPORTS IN GOVT-CONTROLLED MANILA PRESS, PRESIDENT MARCOS HAD SERIES OF MEETINGS BEGINNING NOV 27 WITH AT LEAST 15 TAUSUG REBEL LEADERS FROM SULU AND ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR PROVINCES AND BASLAN ISLAND. MARCOS ALLEGEDLY JOURNEYED TO JOLO ISLAND FOR LATE EVENING RENDEZVOUS ON NOV 27 IN REBEL TERRITORY. REBEL LEADERS THEN REPORTEDLY ACCOMPANIED PRESIDENT BACK TO MANILA FOR
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 13463 041045Z

FURTHER MEETINGS AT WHICH "AGREEMENT OF COOPERATION"

WAS FORGED. THERE IS NO MENTION OF TERMS OF AGREEMENT OR SURRENDER OF WEAPONS BY REBELS.

2. PRESS ARTICLES ALSO REPORT THAT MARCOS ISSUED LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS 149 TO COMMODORE ROMULO ESPALDON, COMMANDER OF SOUTHWEST COMMAND, STRESSING THAT PEACE FND ORDER MUST BE RESTORED IN MUSLIM AREAS BEFORE PROGRAMS OF REHABILITATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAN BE UNDERTAKEN. MARCOS NOTED THAT HIS POLICY FOR MUSLIM FILIPINOS INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING: (1) GENERAL AMNESTY FOR REBELS WHO RETURN TO THE GOVERNMENT FOLD, (2) APPOINTMENT OF MORE MUSLIMS (INCLUDING FORMER REBELS) TO GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, (3) ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING PRIVATE FUNDS TO RECONSTRUCT MOSQUES DESTROYED BY FIGHTING, (4) GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY DESTROYED BY FIGHTING, (5) MORE GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MUSLIMS, (6) LOANS FOR MUSLIMS FROM THE NEW MUSLIM BANK (7) ALLOCATION OF PRIVATE RICE AND CORN LAND TO TENANTS AS PART OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM AND OF PUBLIC LAND TO LANDLESS MUSLIMS AND (8) FUNDS BORROWED FROM FOREIGN BANKS, INCLUDING THE IBRD AND ADB, WILL BE USED TO FINANCE A MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN MUSLIM PROVINCES. IT WAS ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT MARCOS DIRECTED STUDIES BE MADE OF CONVERTING BASILAN ISLAND INTO A SEPARATE PROVINCE.

3. COMMENT. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS DID NOT RPT NOT TRAVEL TO OR MEET WITH REBELS IN JOLO BYT THAT SOME TAUSUG REBELS DID SEE MARCOS IN MANILA FOR SEVERAL DAYS LAST WEEK. WE PRESUME THIS RESULTED FROM EFFORTS OF COMMODORE ESPALDON AND FORMER CONGRESSMAN ANTONIO RAQUIZA, ON INSTRUCTIONS OF PRESIDENT, TO UNDERTAKE NEGOTIATIONS WITH REBELS IN SULU. WHILE MOST NAMES LISTED IN PRESS OF REBELS WHO MET WITH MARCOS ARE UNFAMILIAR TO US, WE DO RECOGNIZE SOME ASSOCIATED WITH MAJOR JOLO-BASED TAUSUG REBEL GROUP LED BY DR. SALAH LOONG.

4. POLICY OF "ATTRACTION" WHICH ESPALDON HAS FOLLOWED IN SOWESCOM SINCE HIS APPOINTMENT THREE MONTHS AGO HAS PRODUCED FEW RESULTS. REBEL FORCES STILL CONTROL SUBSTANTIAL AREAS OF TAWITAWI AND SULU PROVINCES AND ON BASILAN ISLAND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANILA 13463 041045Z

AND CONTINUE SPORADIC ATTACKS AGAINST GOVERNMENT POSITIONS.

5. DESCRIPTION BY MARCOS OF GOP POLICY TOWARDS MUSLIM PROVINCES APPEARS TO CONTAIN LITTLE THAT IS NEW, WITH EXCEPTION OF HINT THAT BASILAN MIGHT BECOME SEPARATE PROVINCE AND HIS PROMISE TO HELP REBUILD MOSQUES. OTHERWISE, THIS APPEARS TO BE REPETITION OF PREVIOUSLY-ANNOUNCED PROGRAMS, MOST OF WHICH ARE BARELY OFF THE GROUND BECAUSE

OF POOR LOCAL SECURITY IN AFFECTED PROVINCES AND INHERENT SLOWNESS OF GOP BUREAUCRACY.

6. SEVERAL MEETINGS BETWEEN MARCOS AND REBEL "LEADERS" EARLIER THIS YEAR PROVED TO BE PROPAGANDISTIC EXTRAVANGANZAS RATHER THAN REAL NEGOTIATIONS AND HAD LITTLE EFFECT OF THE MUSLIM INSURGENCY. LAST WEEK'S ACTIVITY MAY BE MORE OF THE SAME, MOTIVATED BY DESIRE OF GOP TO IMPRESS ARAB OIL PRODUCERS FAVORABLY. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF ANY REAL PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE BY GOVT IN NEGOTIATING WITH SIGNIFICANT REBEL ELEMENTS IN SOWESCOM AREA, AND WE WILL REPORT FURTHER ON THIS SUBJECT, BUT IT AT LEAST APPEARS THAT SOME REBEL GROUPS AND GOVT ARE TALKING TO EACH OTHER.
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